United States Navy



Pre-Flight School Band

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
1944

The Cloudbuster Band In Pictures



JOHN P. GRAFF
Commander, USN (Ret.)
Commanding Officer



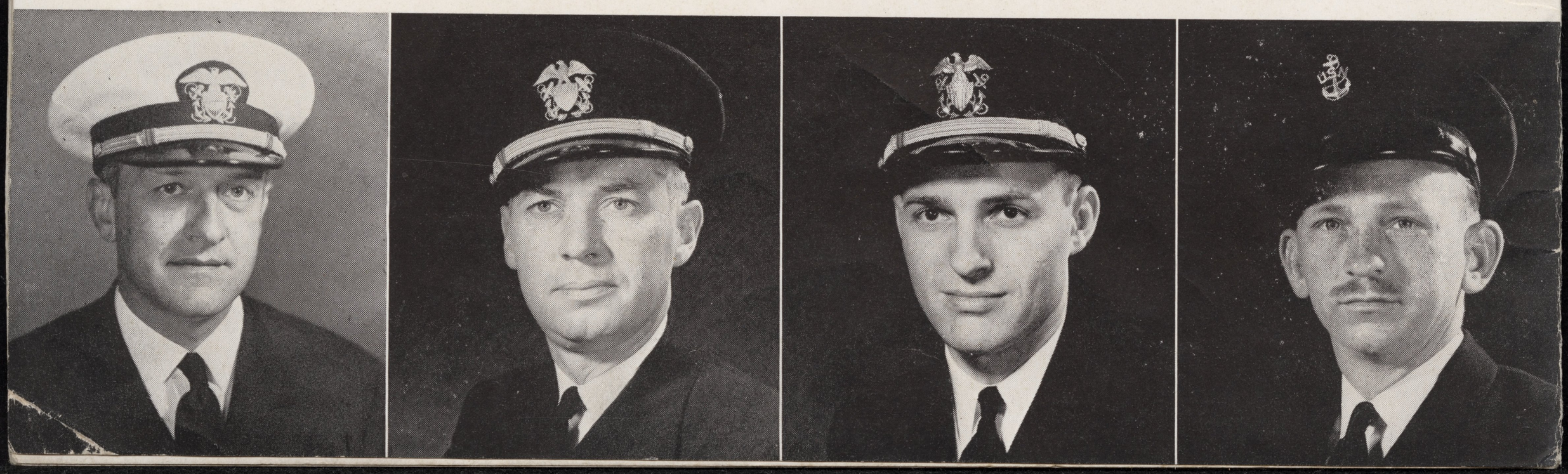
JAMES P. RAUGH
Lieut. Commander, USNR
Executive Officer

GEORGE J. GREWENOW
Lieutenant, USNR
Chaplain

JOHN F. GILDAY
Lieut. Commander, USNR
Officer-in-Charge,
Cadet Regiment

LEONARD EISERER
Lieutenant (jg), USNR
Welfare and Recreation Officer

STEPHEN W. MCREYNOLDS
Chief Musician, USNR



Story of the Band

The story of the first all-Negro Navy band of this war dates back to April of 1942 when plans were being advanced to organize a 44-piece band for the U. S. Navy Pre-Flight School scheduled to be commissioned the following month at Chapel Hill, N. C.

With the aim of creating the band from the best Negro musicians available in North Carolina, the Navy Department sent Chief Bandmaster C. E. Dudrow, USN (Ret.), to North Carolina to select the bandsmen and supervise their early training. Playing an important role in organization of the band was a representative committee formed by North Carolina Governor J. Melville Broughton and consisting of Lieut. (jg) John P. Graff, USN (Ret.), Executive Officer of the Pre-Flight School (now Comdr. Graff, Commanding Officer of the School); William D. Carmichael, Jr., Comptroller of the University of North Carolina; C. C. Spaulding, president of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co.; Dr. F. D. Bluford, president of the Agricultural and Technical College, Greensboro, N. C.; Dr. J. E. Shepard, president of North Carolina State Teachers College for Negroes; Dr. J. W. Seabrook, president of the Fayetteville State Teachers College, and Harold M. Holmes, principal of the Orange County Training School.

On May 27, 1942, the selected musicians assembled in Raleigh, N. C., and entrained for Norfolk, Va., and nine weeks of naval indoctrination. It was essentially a college trained group, one-third of them being college graduates, and almost all of the remainder having at least two years of college work to their credit.

The first few days at Norfolk were typical of initiation into boot camp life . . . securing complete outfits, marking clothes, learning to roll them, physical examinations, and shots. Platoon drill always seemed to come at the hottest time of day, and there was classroom instruction in knots and splices, security, naval customs and organization, nomenclature and recognition, flags and insignia, personal hygiene and first aid, as well as sessions of swimming, practice on the rifle range, and physical drill set to music.

In four weeks the preliminary training was over. The instruments arrived—all but the clarinets, which came later—and band practice began. Then came field drill and training for ceremonies. Soon the young band had taken over several of the weekly regimental reviews of the veteran Norfolk band.

Reporting to Chapel Hill on July 31, 1942, the band was received with enthusiasm by Pre-Flight personnel who had anticipated eagerly the arrival of the Navy music makers. The group was housed in a new building started as a community center for the negroes of Chapel Hill. An attractively planned structure of natural-color rock, it was taken over and completed for the headquarters of the Pre-Flight band.

No time was lost in getting the band initiated into its duties at the Pre-Flight School. There were baseball games, Smokers, picnics, and dances to play for right from the start, in addition to the routine cadet formations and parades.

Special assignments during the 21 months of service at the Pre-Flight School include numerous regimental reviews; war bond rallies and parades in Raleigh and Durham; Army-Navy E-Award presentations; a ship launching in Wilmington. There have been summer concert series, and music at baseball, basketball, and football games.

The swing section of the band has played for more than a hundred occasions, and counting the daily period parades of the cadets, the band has played for almost ten times as many military formations.



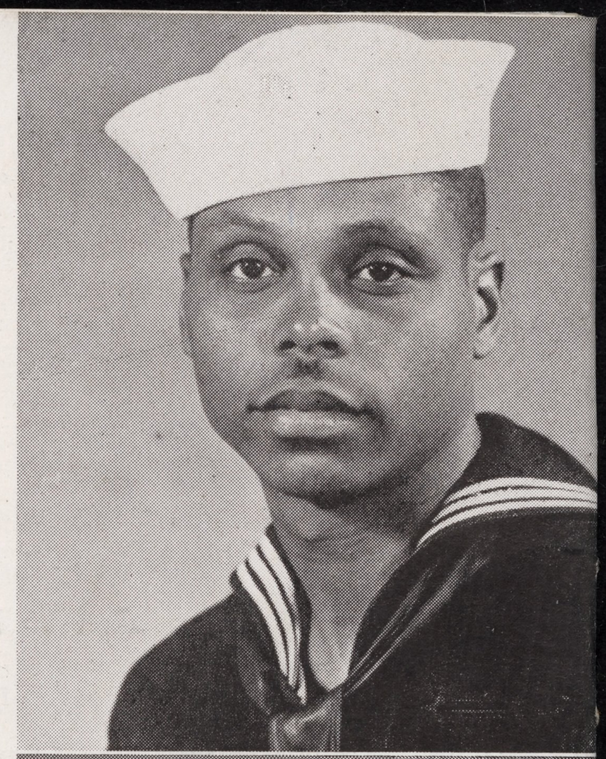
JAMES B. PARSONS
Mus1c, USNR

• Director of the Band at the U. S. Navy Pre-Flight School, Chapel Hill, N. C., is James B. Parsons, Musician First Class, USNR.

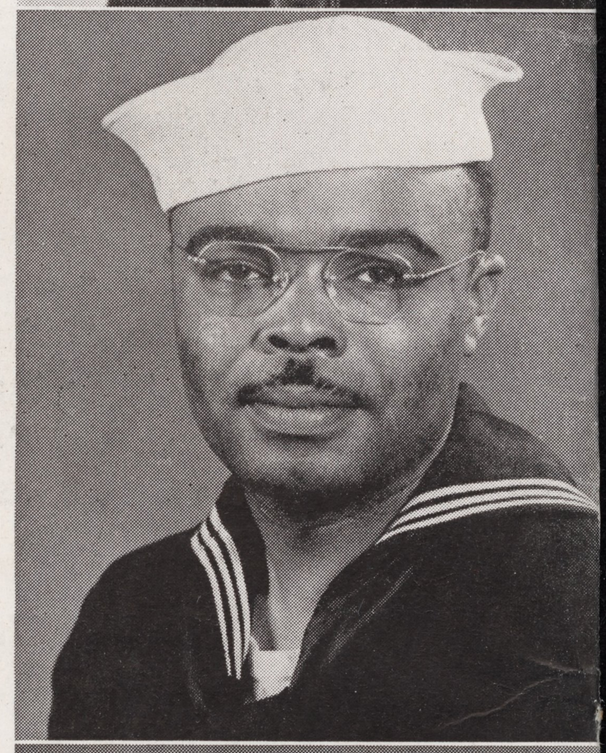
• After receiving his BA and BM degrees at James Millikin University, Decatur, Ill., in 1934, he became field agent for Lincoln University, Jefferson, Mo., and served successively there as freshman dean and instructor of music until 1938, when he was appointed acting head of the music department.

• In 1940 he became director of instrumental music for the Negro school system in Greensboro, N. C. He held that position until the time of entering naval service in 1942.

JAMES D. MORGAN, JR.
Mus2c, USNR
Comfort, N. C.
Drum Major
A. & T. College
"Jimmy"
"Strictly a puzzlebug."



MELVIN L. WALL
Mus2c, USNR
Albemarle, N. C.
Co-Leader of Swing Band
Clarinet and Saxophone
A. & T. College
"Guest Artist"
"Not lazy, just don't feel like working."



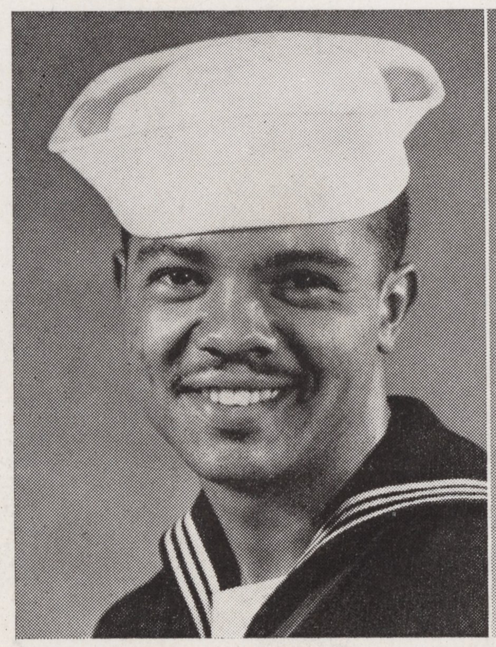
WILLIAM H. COLE
Mus2c, USNR
Hampton, Va.
Co-Leader of Swing Band
Piano and Trombone
Hampton Institute
"Lanky"
"This is your world—lend me a corner."



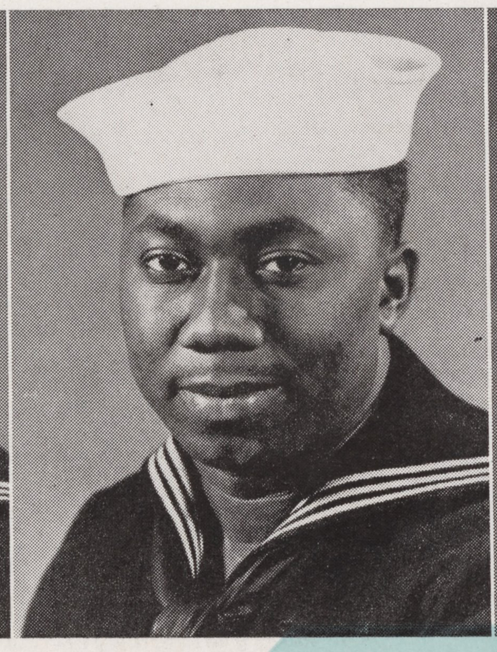


• A modern community center structure serves as quarters for the Pre-Flight band.

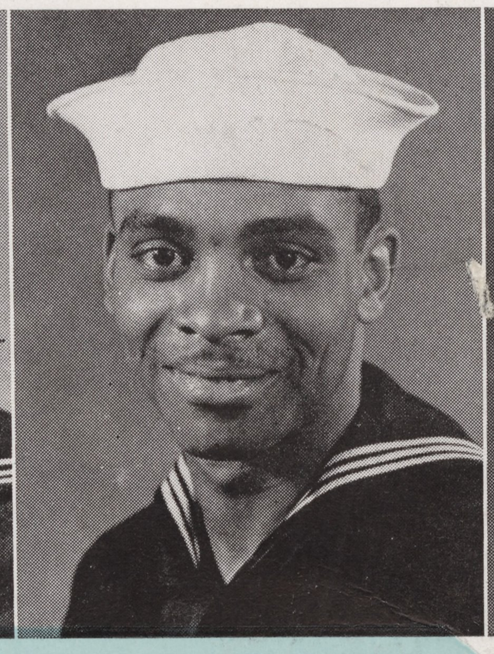
Members of the Band



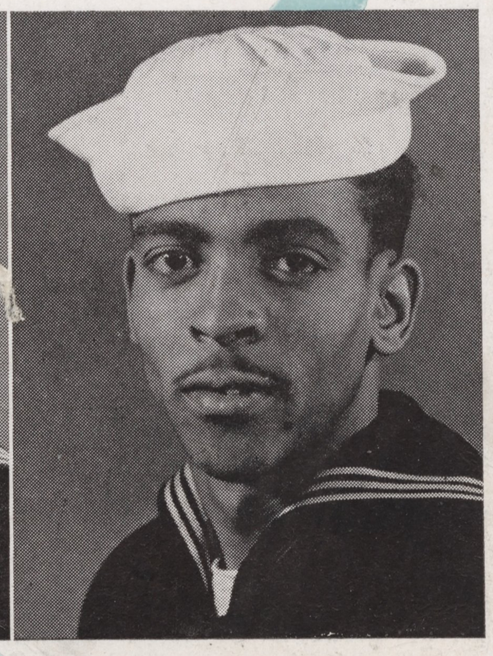
ROBERT E. BROWER
Mus2c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Baritone
A. & T. College
"B Scout"
"Don Juan of the County."



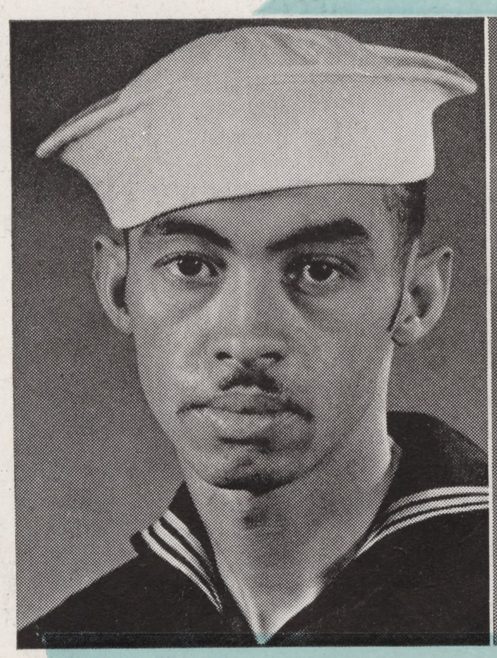
ALTON V. BUTLER, JR.
Mus2c, USNR
Winston-Salem, N. C.
Clarinet and Saxophone
A. & T. College
"Trussle"
"Even the best isn't good enough."



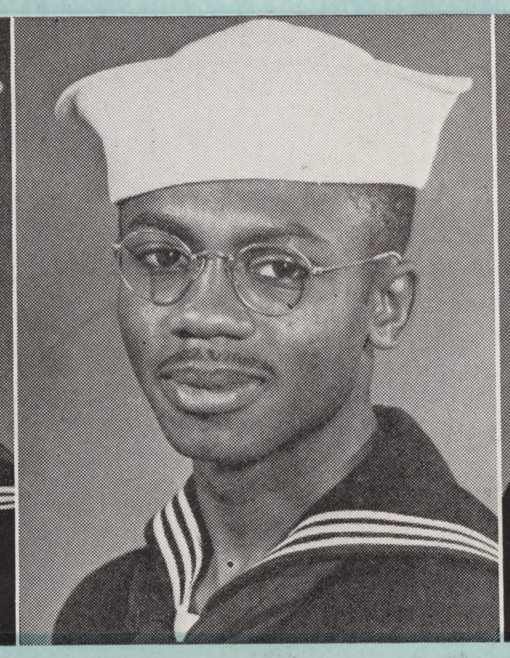
JOHN E. CARLSON
Mus3c, USNR
Laurinburg, N. C.
Trombone
A. & T. College
"Doughboy"
"I buy, sell or trade anything."



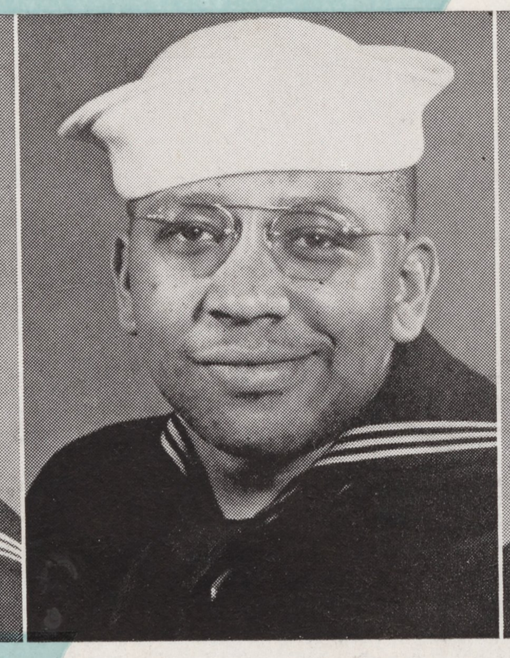
WALTER F. CARLSON, JR.
Mus3c, USNR
Laurinburg, N. C.
Trumpet
A. & T. College
"Walt"
"Make your sac for a dime."



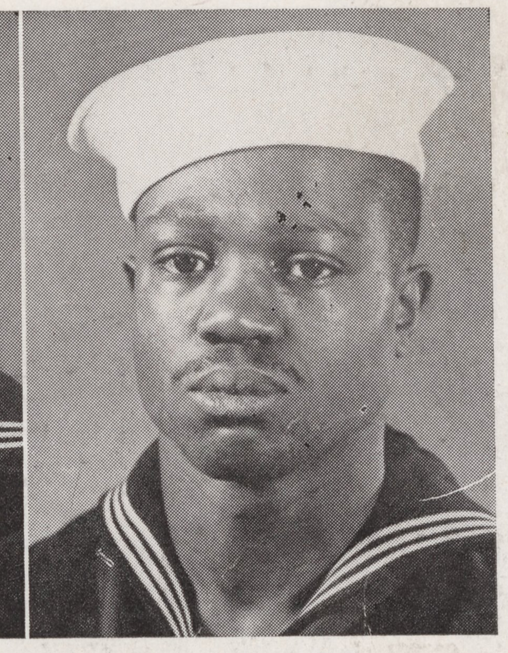
JOHN D. CLAY
Mus3c, USNR
Roxboro, N. C.
Clarinet
A. & T. College
"Interne"
"Eyes and ears of the world."



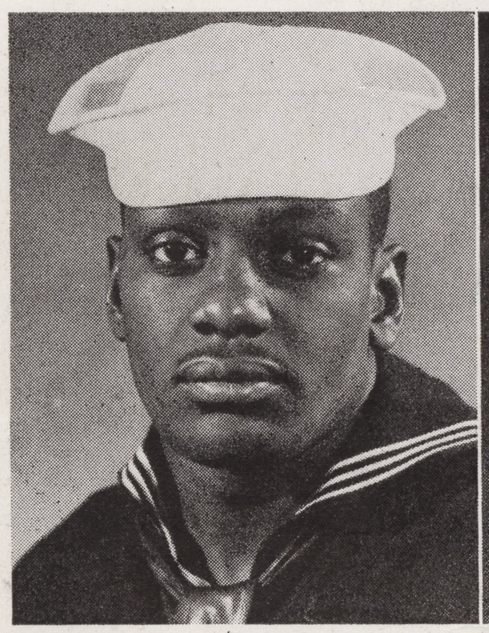
WILLIE E. CURRIE, JR.
Mus2c, USNR
St. Paul, N. C.
Trumpet
A. & T. College
"Little Doc"
"The Big Three—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Currie."



THOMAS J. GAVIN, JR.
Mus3c, USNR
Lumberton, N. C.
Saxophone
A. & T. College
"You break it, I'll fix it."



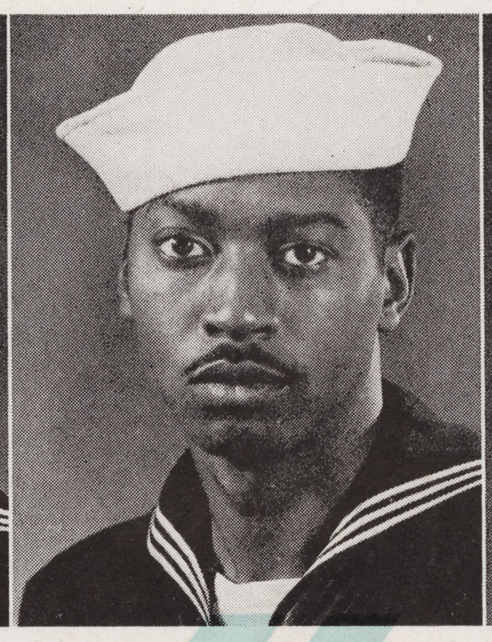
WARMOTH T. GIBBS, JR.
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Clarinet
A. & T. College
"Warmmy"
"I'm on the road to fame."



WILLIAM R. GIBSON
Mus3c, USNR
Laurinburg, N. C.
French Horn
A. & T. College
"Stokey"
"Lies like a log, snores like a hog."



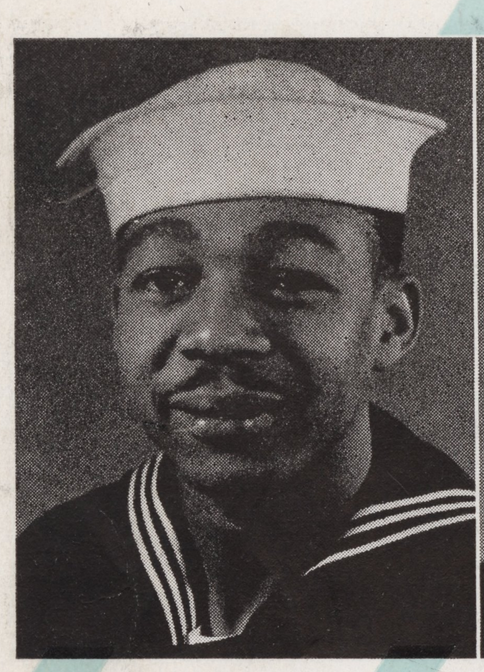
JOHN S. GILMER
Mus2c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Clarinet
Dudley
"Gus"
"Always striving to keep up."



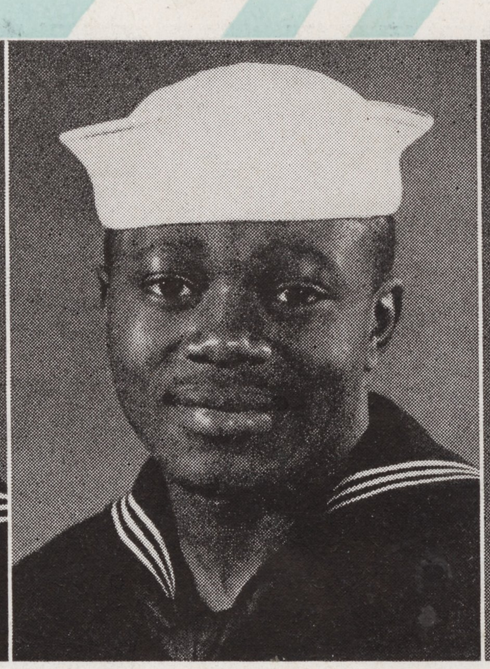
ARTHUR W. GUY
Mus2c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Drums
A. & T. College
"Bugs Bunny"
"Like a powder puff, I'm for the women."



WALTER F. HAITH
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Drums
A. & T. College
"Krup"
"Better late than never."



OTTO D. HARRIS
Mus2c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Bass and Bass Viol
Dudley
"Giggleberry"
"Full of talk and giggles."



WRAY R. HERRING
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Baritone and Trombone
Dudley
"Heavy"
"What do you propose to do about it?"



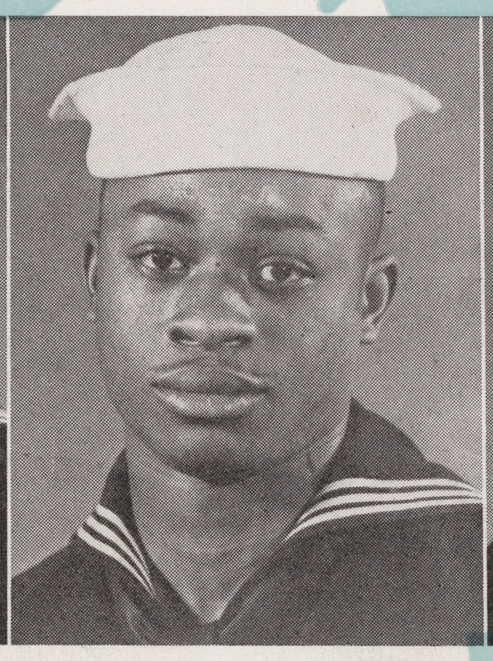
SIMEON O. HOLLOWAY
Mus3c, USNR
Gary, Ind.
Baritone Saxophone
North Carolina College
"Butch"
"Paul Robeson is tops."



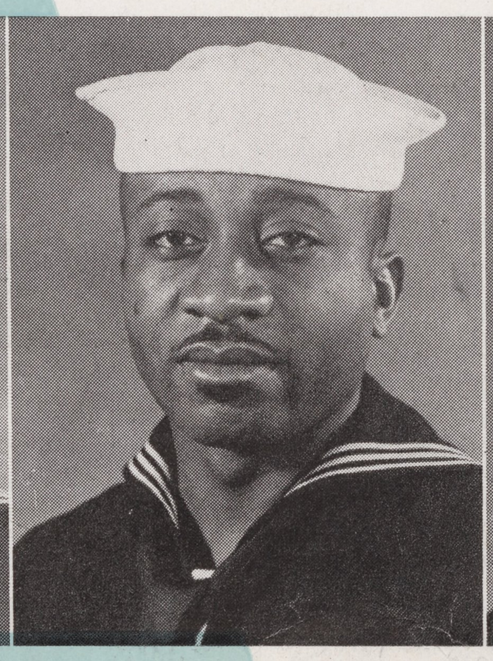
ROGER F. HOLT
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Trombone
A. & T. College
"De Mole"
"If silence were golden, he'd be broke."



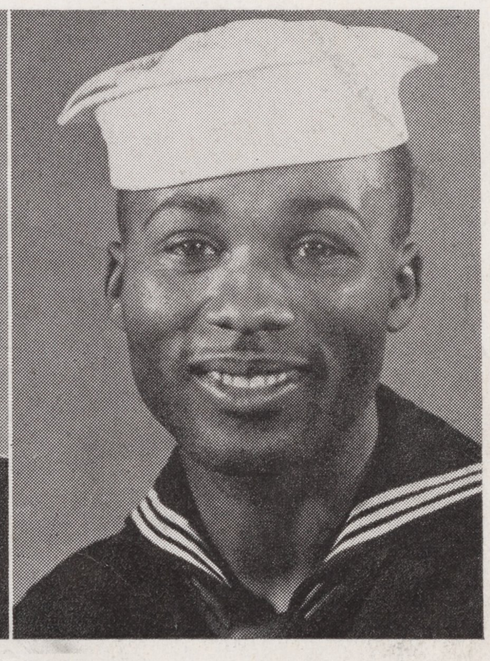
SILAS A. JAMES
Mus 2c, USNR
Durham, N. C.
Clarinet and Saxophone
North Carolina College
and
Hampton Institute
"Stick"
"Sees all, says little."



RICHARD H. L. JONES
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Trombone
A. & T. College
"Trummie"
"Everybody's 'George' to to him."



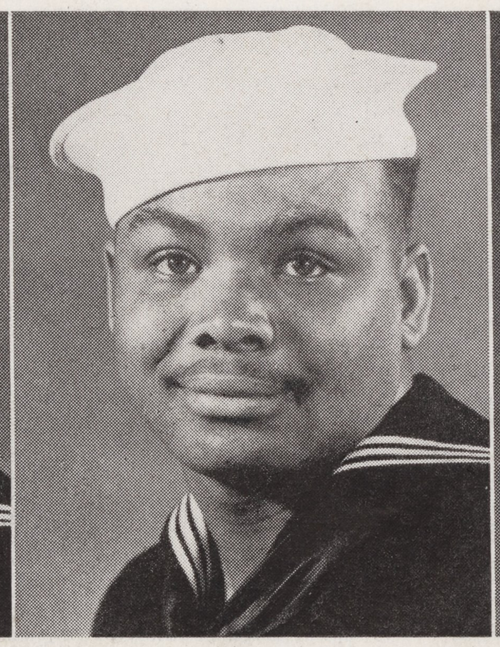
JULIAN B. JORDAN
Mus2c, USNR
Charlotte, N. C.
Trombone
Hampton Institute
"Doc"
"Wine, women, and a good book—they satisfy."



WILLIE C. JUDKINS
Mus3c, USNR
Durham, N. C.
Clarinet and Saxophone
North Carolina College
"Helliefied"
"God's gift to women—he thinks."



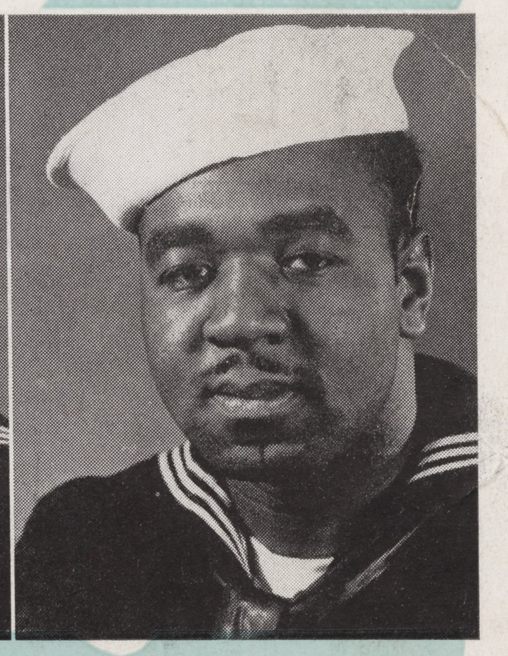
THOMAS A. KELLER
Mus2c, USNR
Springfield, O.
Drums
North Carolina College
"Freddy Kilowatt"
"What the Sam Hill."



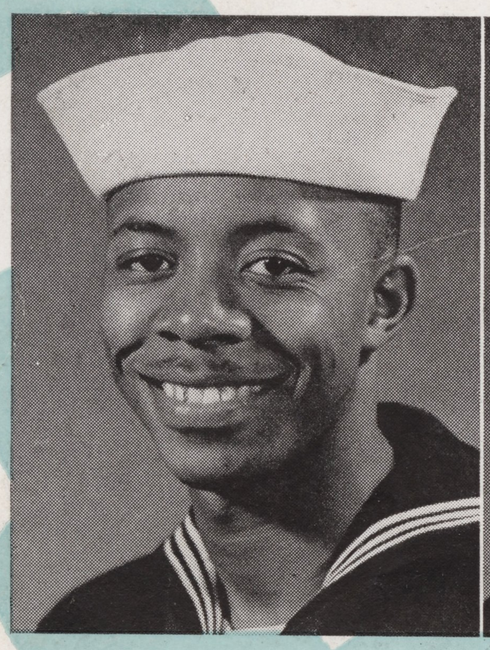
ROY H. LAKE
Mus2c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Clarinet
Dudley
"Baby Lake"
"The mail must go through."



BENNIE D. LAKIN
Mus2c, USNR
Florence, S. C.
Cornet
"Minnesota, Kid"
"What the ——, huh?"



HUEY L. LAWRENCE
Mus2c, USNR
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Trumpet
A. & T. College
"Pip"
"Footloose and fancy free."



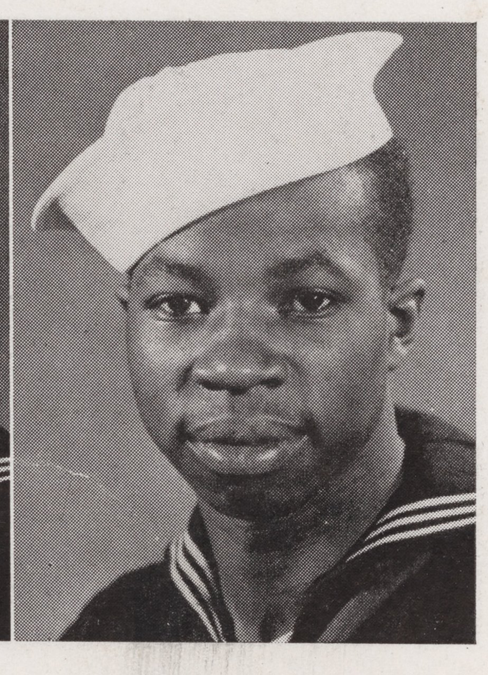
JOHN MASON
Mus3c, USNR
Durham, N. C.
French Horn
Hillside
"June"
"You seldom know he is around."



NATHANIEL S. MOREHEAD
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Trombone
A. & T. College
"Bubbles"
"A friend indeed—when he's in need."



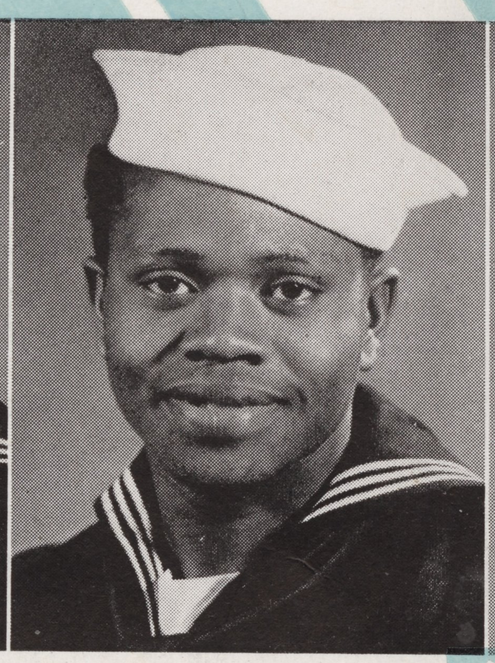
CALVIN F. MORROW
Mus2c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
French Horn
Dudley
"Moon"
"A man after my own heart."



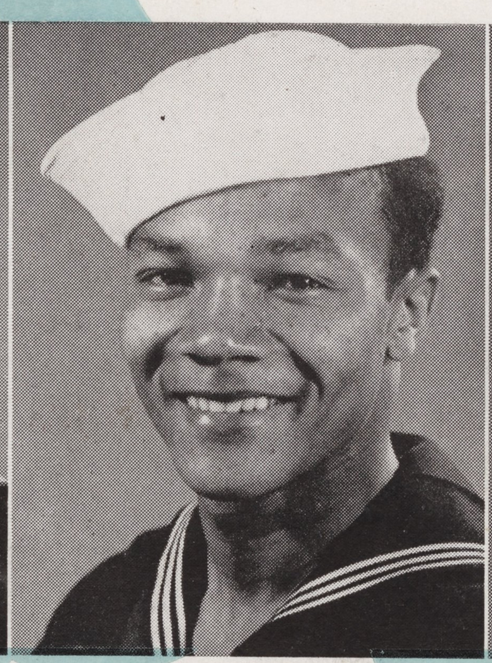
RAYMOND PETTIFORD
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Saxophone
Dudley
"Blueford"
"Work fascinates me—could look at it for hours."



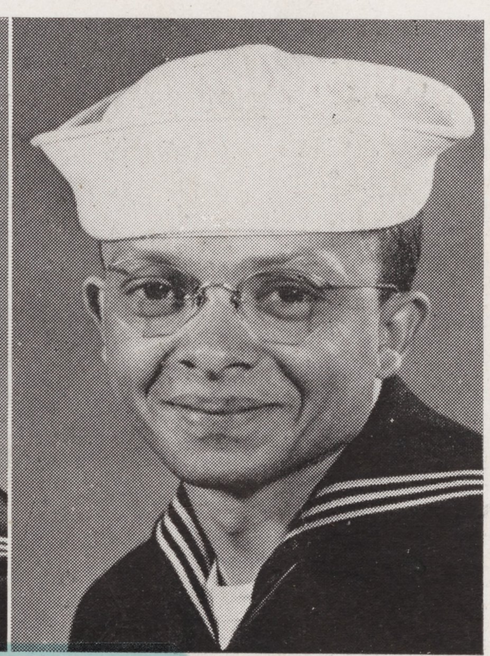
HERBERT E. REEDER
Mus2c, USNR
Columbia, S. C.
Clarinet and saxophone
South Carolina State
"Duck Reeder"
"He's often wrong."



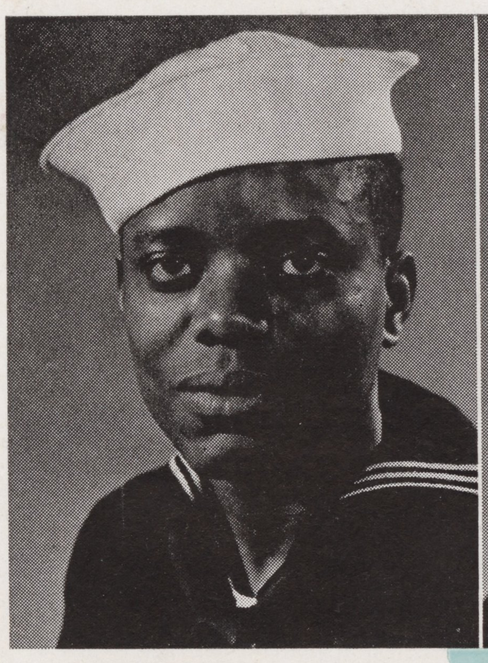
JAMES B. SCOTT
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Bass Horn
Dudley
"Pop Charlie"
"His wacky remarks seldom fail to hit."



ROBERT E. SELLERS
Mus3c, USNR
Durham, N. C.
Bass Horn
Hillside
"Junior"
"Worry is a stranger to me."



ROYLAND V. SILER
Mus3c, USNR
Newport News, Va.
Trumpet
A. & T. College
"Si"
"Duty is sweet, but liberty is sweeter."



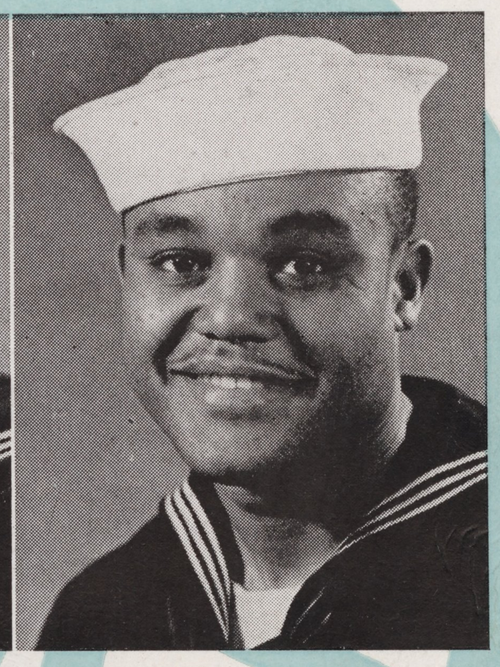
WILLIAM E. SKINNER
Mus3c, USNR
Norfolk, Va.
Clarinet
A. & T. College
"Bro, Blow"
"Profit or no deal."



ROBERT M. TATE
Mus2c, USNR
Durham, N. C.
Cornet
Johnson C. Smith University
"Old Dad"
"You're growing, son."

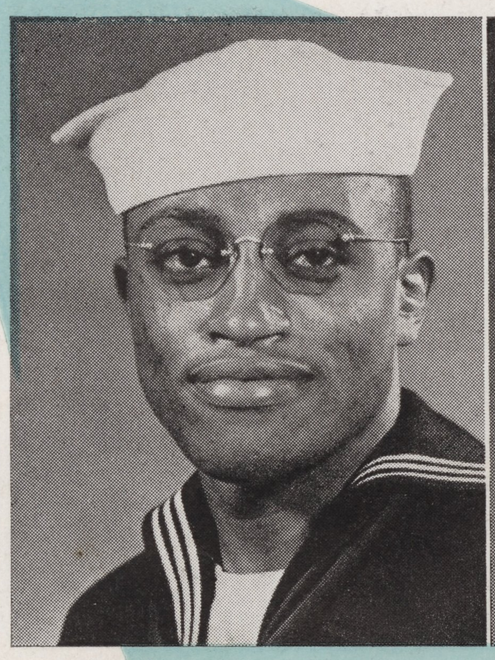


ABE THURMAN
Mus2c, USNR
Newark, N. J.
Piccolo
A. & T. College
"Cecil"
"All the great men are dying— I don't feel so well myself."

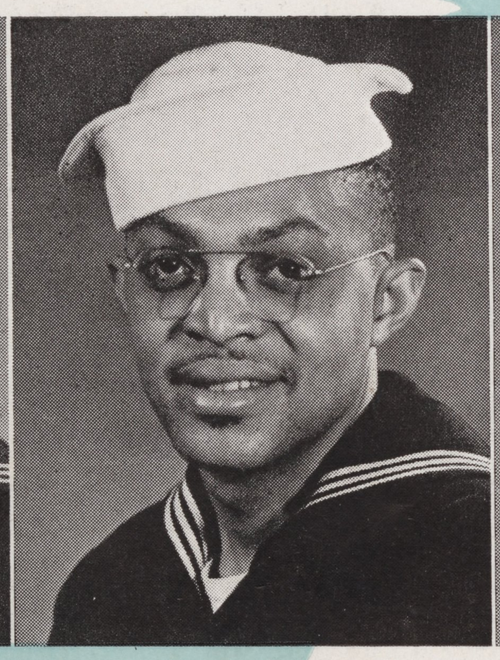


JEWITT L. WHITE
Mus2c, USNR
Gary, Ind.
Cornet
A. & T. College
"Ju Ju"
"Not to be hurried or confused."

"Semper Fe"
Teddy



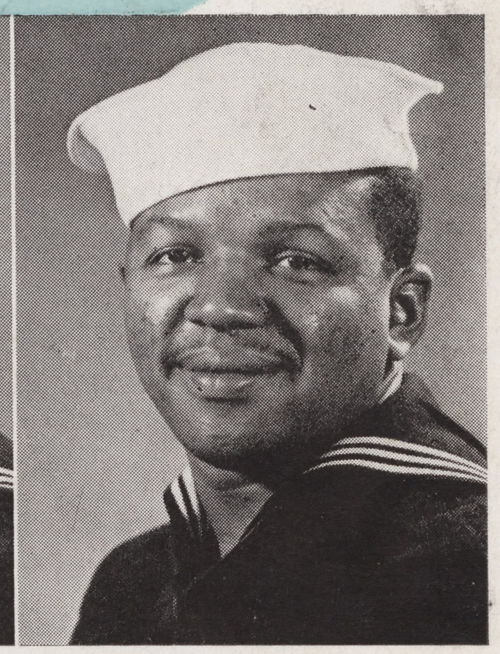
SHERMAN U. WILLIAMSON
Mus2c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
French Horn
A. & T. College
"Gremlin"
"The Band's Michaelangelo"



LAWYARD L. WILSON
Mus2c, USNR
Johnson City, Tenn.
Saxophone
A. & T. College
"Frog"
"He liked whatever he looked on, and he looked on all the girls."

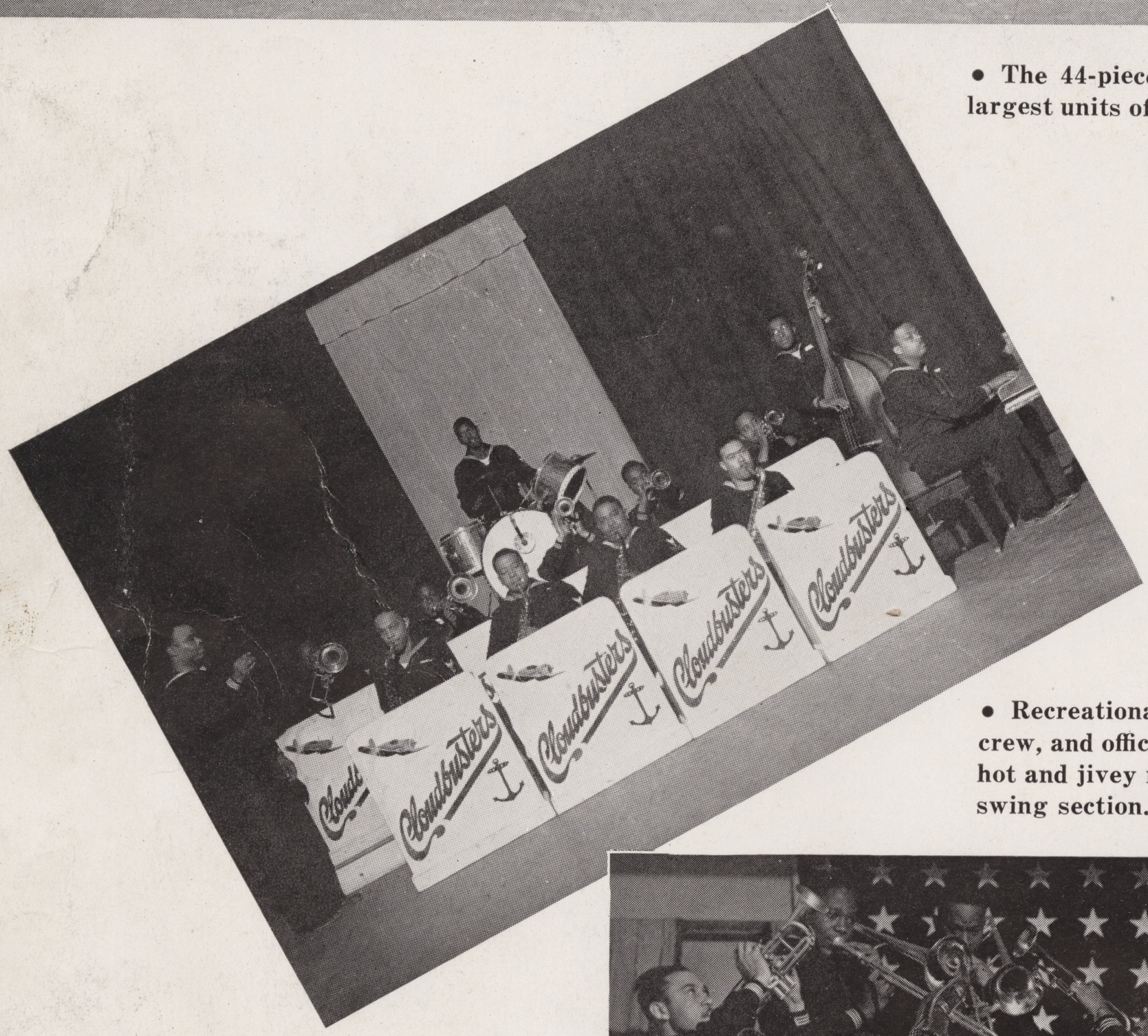


CHARLES L. WOODS
Mus2c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Bass and Bass Viol
A. & T. College
"Stump"
"I may die hungry but never tired."



JAMES C. YOURSE
Mus3c, USNR
Greensboro, N. C.
Trumpet
A. & T. College
"Beer Belly"
"His walk is his trade mark."





• **The 44-piece Band is one of the largest units of its type in the Navy.**

• **Recreational affairs for cadets, crew, and officers are sparked by the hot and jivey rhythms of the Band's swing section.**



• **Impromptu jam sessions are popular with the listeners and swingsters alike.**

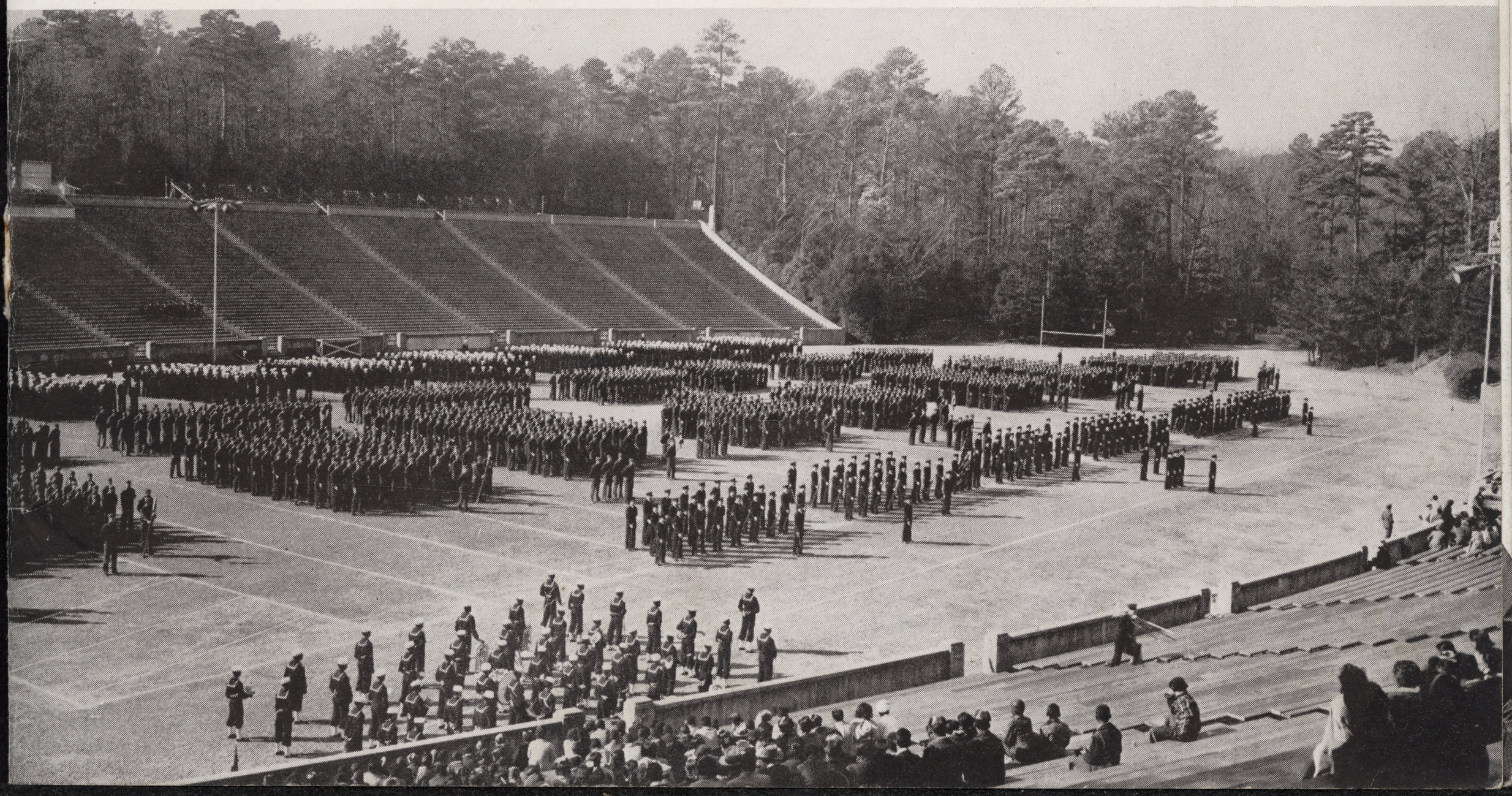


• Unusual view from above is this of the Band participating in the 1942 Navy Day celebration at Raleigh, N. C.



• The drum major struts his stuff.

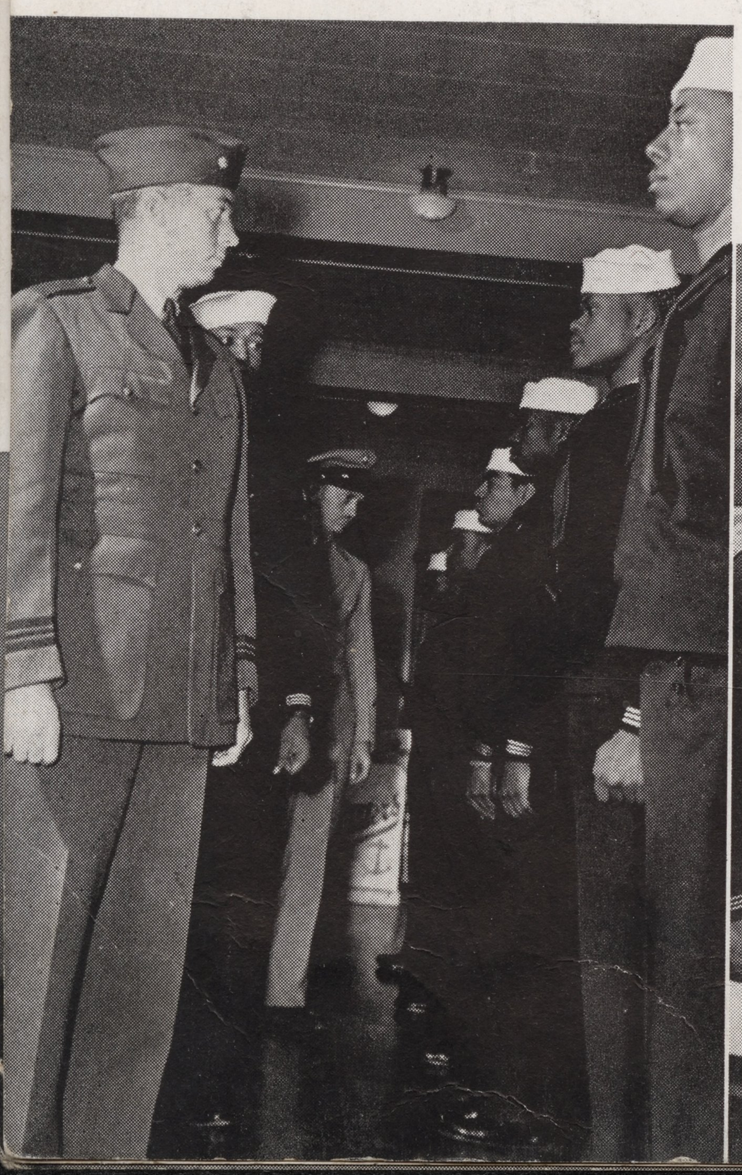
• Most impressive, perhaps, of the Band's formal engagements is that of playing for colorful Regimental Reviews in Kenan Stadium.







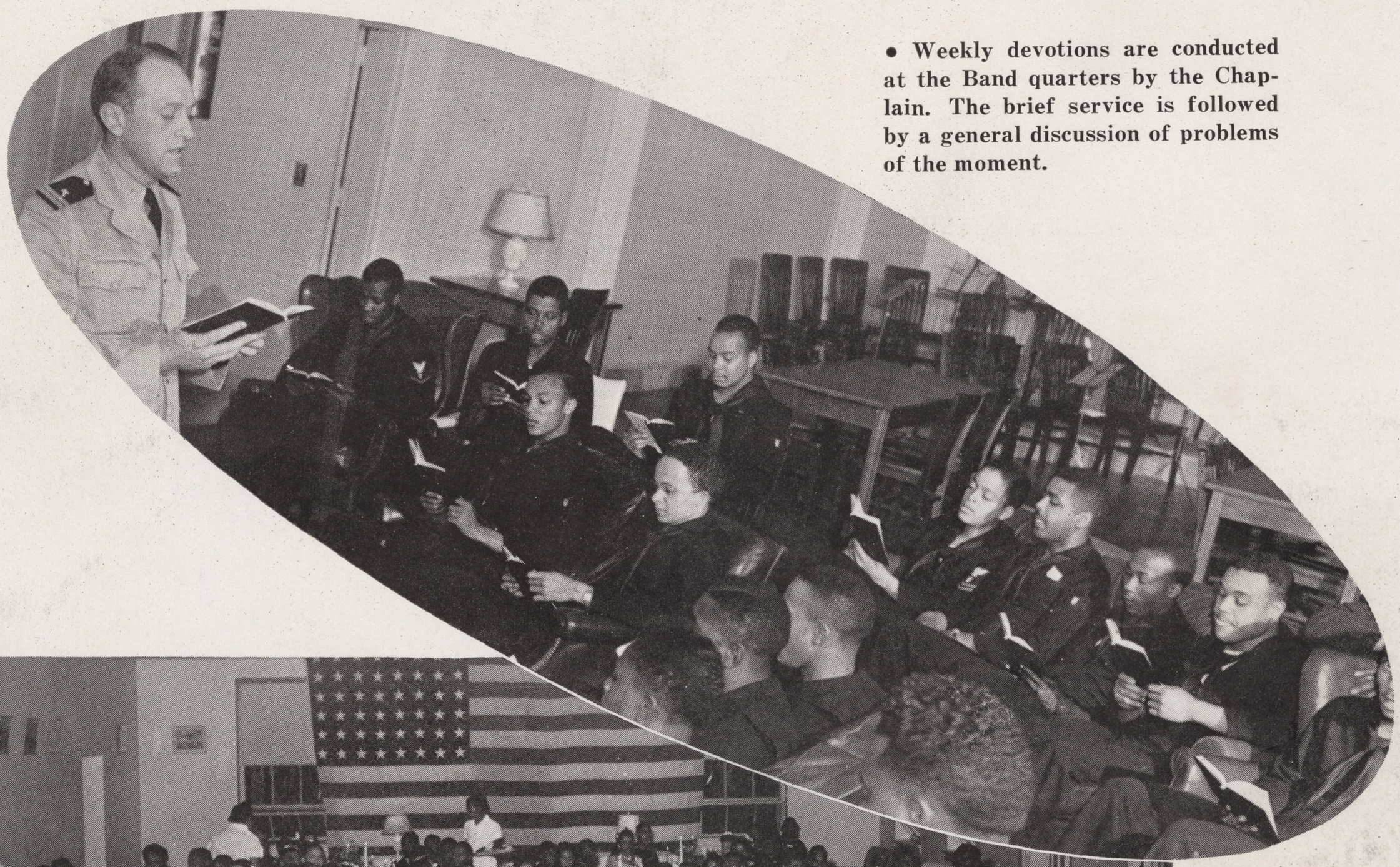
• Playing at Sunday church formations (above), and at daily meal formations (left), is an important part of the Band's work.



• There is more to Navy band life than playing sweet music. Weekly inspection of personnel, rooms, and instruments by the Officer-in-Charge, Cadet Regiment, impresses the bandsmen with the need for keeping everything in shipshape order, Navy style.







• Weekly devotions are conducted at the Band quarters by the Chaplain. The brief service is followed by a general discussion of problems of the moment.



• While the Band's customary role at Pre-Flight parties is that of entertaining others, time out is taken from the work schedule for the bandsmen to enjoy a dinner dance themselves.



• With dinner stowed away, members of the Band swing and hop to hot rhythms they usually turn out for others.

• At a station where physical fitness is a keynote among the cadets, the bandsmen get in for their share of exercise and physical activity.

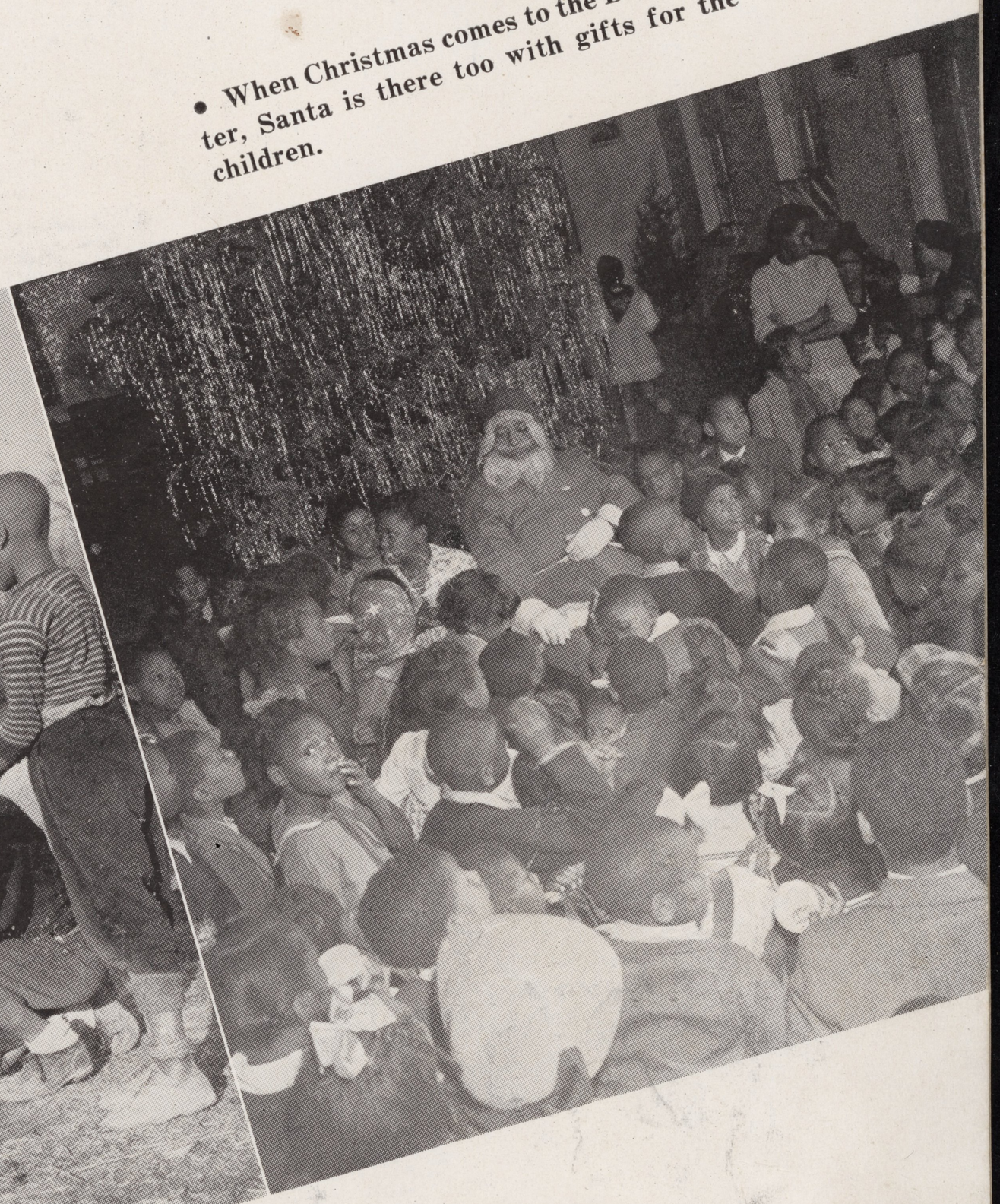




• The close communal feeling between members of the Band and neighbor children is reflected here where three of the swingsters show eager youngsters how they do it with trombone, saxophone, and trumpet.

• There's no substitute for learning by doing, and this youngster enjoys the process thoroughly, under the tutelage of Band Leader Parsons.

• When Christmas comes to the Band center, Santa is there too with gifts for the children.



• Baseball is a favorite sport with both bandsmen and their youthful admirers.



• Basketball is included in leisure time activities. The court team marked up a record of five wins and one loss during their 1943-44 season.



Hubert E. Reeder.

Willie E. Currie

Nathaniel S.

Willie C. Jackson

Thos. Jefferson

James B. Parsons

Calvin T. Hannan

Ada Thurman

William Robinson

Wm. B. Bowles

Herbert E. Reeder

Roland V. Liard

Lemuel Bentley

John D. Clay

Edmund Butts

A. Teller

Robert Sellers

Wm. A. Cole

D. James

C. Nurse

Public

Scott S. White

Otto Eskaro Harris

Thomas J. Gavin Jr.

John E. Carlson

Charles Lewis Woods

Bennie D. Larkin

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